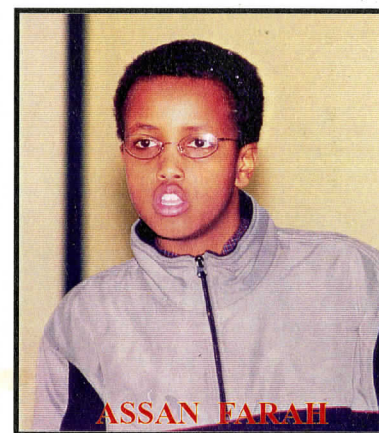
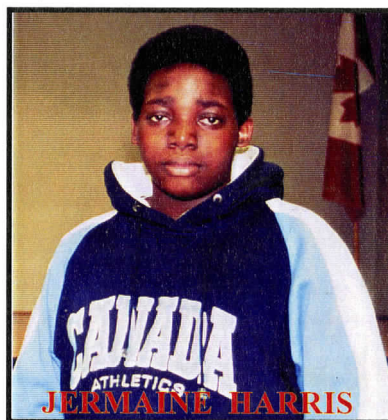
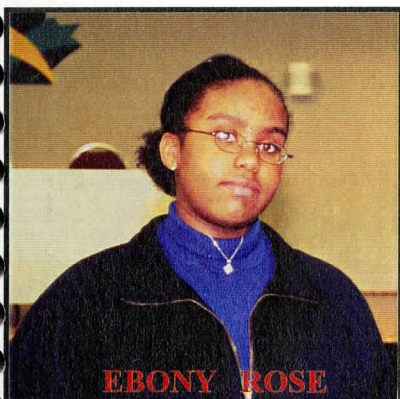


BLACK YOUTH VIOLENCE



Causes & Cures



Report on Project in Toronto's African Canadian Community

Project Sponsor:
Jamaican Canadian Association, Toronto

Project Consultant:
Dynamic Management Consultants Inc
Toronto, CANADA
May 2003

Front Cover

Featured on the front cover are four of the outstanding young people who participated in the focus group sessions that provided valuable insights into the issues that face Black youth in Toronto.

They are all students.

Nasra is at university at Ryerson; Jermaine attends York Humber High School; Ebony attends Humberwood Downs Junior Middle Academy and Hassan attends Humber Summit Middle School.

BLACK YOUTH VIOLENCE – Causes & Cures

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About the Jamaican Canadian Association

BLACK YOUTH VIOLENCE -- CAUSES & CURES

Acknowledgements

This project has benefited from the contribution of many individuals and organizations and the Association is deeply appreciative of their contribution.

*Funding was provided by the **City of Toronto** and the **Ontario Ministry of Public Safety and Security**. Without these allocations this project would not have been possible.*

*The support of our **project partners** – the **Black Business & Professional Association**, the **Canadian Alliance of Black Educators** and the **York Region District School Board** - was important for the project to gain the widest acceptance and was also valuable in allowing the project organizers to gain access to useful Community sources of information and participation. These sources included **youth groups, schools** and other organizations whose co-operation was vital for securing participants for the focus group sessions.*

*The four youths: **Nasra Agil, Jermaine Harris, Ebony Rose and Hassan Farah** (featured on the Report cover), played a vital role in this project as presenters. So, too, did those other Community members – the mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, of Community youth; representatives of service groups and organizations; the press; police representatives and all the other members of the general public - who braved the inclement weather on January 18, 2003 to participate in the Youth Conference.*

We wish to thank all participants, including those not mentioned because of limited space, for their contribution without which this project would not have realized the success that it has.

Any shortcoming of the project is due entirely to us and in no way detracts from the value of the contribution of the volunteers, project partners, the youths and other participants.

*Valarie Steele
Chair
Jamaican Canadian Association*

REPORT on PROJECT

BLACK YOUTH VIOLENCE -- CAUSES & CURES

Executive Summary

In 2000, Toronto's African Canadian Community expressed its concerns to the Jamaican Canadian Association (JCA) about Black youth being excessively involved in violence and demanded that the Association use its authority and influence to address the situation. The JCA responded by working with a Community consultant on a project to identify the causes and search for cures for such violence and by securing funding (from Toronto and the Ontario government) to carry out the project.

Implemented over December 2001 to January 2003, the project involved:

1. Research into the causes of Black youth violence including an understanding of the issues, attitudes, circumstances, etc. that trigger violence;
2. A Conference to explore the causes and a search for solutions, including: building long-term partnerships among parents, teachers, social services, police, etc;
3. Follow-up programs to support crime prevention, reduce youth violence and related criminal activity in the Community and strengthen the Community to respond to the needs of its youth.

The project brought together 113 young people; an estimated 40 parents; teachers from a number of schools/educational institutions; several social services practitioners with direct experience in working with Black youth victims/perpetrators of violence; representatives from other organizations that work with "at-risk" Black youth; several Toronto churches and officers from Ontario Police Services 31 Division.

Research Phase

In the research phase, five focus group sessions were organized. The deliberations provided valuable insights into: how **violence is defined** by the youth; what they regard as **appropriate responses to violence**; the **root causes of violence**; **violence and the media** (citing movies / TV shows that regularly portray violence); the **(in)effectiveness of teachers in curbing violence in schools**; their experience regarding **zero tolerance in schools**; **young women and violence**; **violence and drugs**; and **racism and violence**.

Discussions also brought out suggestions for tackling the issues identified. These included **economic** responses; suggestions for changes in **media depiction of Blacks**; awareness of the need for conscious polices to avoid **gender-based violence**; responses to **issues in schools** and in the **home** and to **issues of racism**

Conference

In the second phase, a representative group of the youths from the focus groups presented the youth perspective to a gathering of adults and institutional representatives at a one-day Conference on January 18, 2003. The presentations provided an insight into youth violence, how as adults contribute to the violence and how they must, as parents, teachers, police, social workers, etc work with youth to address the problems.

The highlights of the Conference were:

Parenting Issues – The noblest duty and greatest responsibility of parents is to nurture their children and to bring them up in a safe, caring environment, with values that will make them into responsible, successful citizens. In Toronto, Black parents must learn to carry out these responsibilities in spite of great social pressures and racism.

School Issues - The Conference felt that Toronto's School System is failing Black students and wondered whether the time has not come for **Black-focused schools** to be established. It also urged the parents to engage the school system, right up to the highest level, in order to ensure that their children receive fair treatment.

Policing Issues - The consensus was that there was great need for Toronto's police to show respect and adopt a more caring approach to Black citizens. At the same time, the Conference acknowledged the genuine concern expressed by the police officers present and assured them of the Community's understanding of the pressures they face and the risk for them in reaching out to the Community in a more ethnic-sensitive manner. It was acknowledged that the community needs a strategy to allow it to capitalize on the interest and expertise of these officers.

Media Issues - Conference participants endorsed the youth's charges of anti-Black bias by the media. They also acknowledged that it was very difficult to influence the media and/or to get it to see and correct its biases.

Racism Issues - Racism issues permeated the discussions, whether the focus was policing, parenting, schooling, the media, or other dimensions of the youths' lives. Suggestions varied between passive response to confronting the racists. It was agreed that giving *carte-blanche* to racists will only lead to continued tension and serve as a recipe for Blacks to remain in an inferior, dependent position.

Conclusion

The immediate project goals of: *Understanding of the Root Impulses for Violence; Empowering Black youth to deal with Violence* and *Creating an Environment of Trust between Black Youth & the Adult World* were realized.

The longer term goals of: *Strengthening the Community's Capacity to Respond to Youth Needs;* and *Building long-term Relationships & Support Community Crime Prevention* could not have been achieved within the span of the project. However, the project was successful in laying a solid foundation for the attainment of these goals through the following specific follow-up actions/proposals:

Development of Community organization Strategies

Using the *York Region Community Policing Initiative as a Model for Toronto*

Youth Empowerment Strategies

Production of a Booklet – *Violence Awareness and Prevention*
and

Wide Dissemination of this Project Report

REPORT on PROJECT

BLACK YOUTH VIOLENCE -- CAUSES & CURES

1: PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Jamaican Canadian Association (JCA) hosted a Conference on **Black Youth Violence - Causes & Cures**, at its premises, 995 Arrow Road, Toronto, on Saturday, January 18, 2003. The Conference - the third, culminating, stage of a project to explore issues of violence with youth from Toronto's African Canadian Community - was attended by a wide cross-section of Community members. It provided a unique forum for Black youth to share with adults their ideas and experiences of violence and their recommendations for curbing such violence.

This Report contains a description of the three phases of the Project, including analysis of the issues around youth violence, and points the way for meaningful action to address the problems identified.

African Canadian Community Concern about Youth Violence

This project arose out of concern by Toronto's African Canadian Community about its youth being involved in violence. There is a widespread perception that Black youth are excessively involved in violence – both as victims and as perpetrators. Toronto's African Canadian Community recognizes that several implications flow from this perception:

- First, as the idea of Black youth being preponderantly responsible for violence is broadcast regularly, it eventually takes hold, resulting in society feeling the need to use a range of negative practices to "defend" itself against violence from young Blacks.
- Further, many young Blacks themselves come to accept the "natural" expression of violence and too often resort to it without understanding its

- root impulses and/or consequences. Thus, they unwittingly help to perpetuate the image of the violent Black person.
- The myth provides a ready excuse for victimization of young Blacks.
- Not only Black youth, but all African Canadians are stigmatized by the myth of Blacks being prone to violence.

While it is generally recognized that only a minority of Black youth is involved in violence and that it is, therefore, unfair to tarnish the entire group because of the actions of a few, the Black Community feels strongly that even this relatively small number is still too many and there is need for urgent remedial action to address this situation.

JCA Responds to the Community's Concerns

In 2000, the Black Community in and around the Greater Toronto Area expressed its concerns to the JCA and demanded that the Association use its authority and influence to address the situation. The JCA responded to these concerns by collaborating with a Community consultant knowledgeable in the area to develop proposals for an all-inclusive Conference on Black Youth Violence, to identify the causes and search for cures for such violence.

The project was implemented over December 2001 to January 2003.

Project Funding

Funding was provided by the City of Toronto's *Social Development & Administration Division Breaking the Cycle of Violence Projects* and Ontario's Ministry of Public Safety and Security *Youth Crime and Violence Initiative*.

2: PROJECT DESIGN

Project Goals And Objectives

(a) Goals

The goals of this project were to:

- i) Develop a comprehensive understanding of the issues, attitudes, factors, circumstances, etc. that lead to acts of violence among Black youth in Toronto's African Canadian Community.
- ii) Empower Black youth in the Community to deal with violent situations by providing them with tools for coping in a non-violent way with the issues, etc.
- iii) Create an environment of mutual respect and trust between youth and the adult world in general and the police/justice system in particular.
- iv) Build long-term partnerships among parents, teachers, social services, police, business, etc on the issue of youth violence.
- v) Support community crime prevention through programs to reduce youth violence and related criminal activity in the Black Community.
- vi) Strengthen the capacity of the Black Community to respond to the needs of its young people.

(b) Objectives

The objectives of this initiative were to:

- i) Research the causes of youth violence.
- ii) Explore with the youth the emotions which they associate with violence - as perpetrator and as victim.
- iii) Increase awareness among the youth of the cost (personal and societal) of violent behaviour.

- iv) Explore approaches for individual behaviour modification and improvements in: parenting, teaching, guiding, counselling, policing, employment of Black youth, etc. to reduce the impulse to violence.
- v) Involve youth, parents, teachers, youth organizations, social workers, the police and justice system, business and the wider society in a search for lasting solutions to the issue of youth violence in the Black Community.
- vi) Establish the nucleus of partnerships between the JCA/other Community organizations and corporations in the areas of: youth skill training and apprenticeship, entrepreneurship, employment, sports, other vocational interests.
- vii) Provide Black youths training in group facilitation and presentation.

The project, therefore, involved a research component to identify the causes of violence among young Blacks, followed by presentation of the research findings to parents, teachers, social workers, police and other involved institutional representatives, and a joint search for solutions.

Main Participants

The project was successful in bringing together:

- 113 young people in one pre-testing exercise and five focus group sessions;
- An estimated 40 parents, as participants in the pre-testing exercise and the Conference;
- Teachers from a number of schools/educational institutions, including: Oakwood Collegiate Institute and York Region District School Board;
- Several social services practitioners with direct experience in working with Black youth victims/perpetrators of violence;
- Representatives from 4 other Ontario organizations which work with "at-risk" black youth, including: Markham African Caribbean Association, Scarborough YMCA, Eva Smith Foundation, and Rexdale Community Health Summer Leadership Program;
- Several Toronto churches;

- The City of Toronto;
- A number of businesses (as potential partners for the JCA in the expected post-Conference program to follow through on Conference recommendations); and;
- Four officers from Ontario Police Services 31 Division and other representation of police interest in developing an understanding of the factors which affect police-Black youth relationships.

Project Partners

The **Black Business and Professional Association**, the **Canadian Alliance of Black Educators**, and the **York Region District School Board** were major partners with the JCA in this project.

The project also offered the opportunity for the partnership arrangement between the JCA and **31 Division of the Toronto Police Services** to be strengthened by providing the opportunity for further police-Community *rapprochement* through interaction between police representatives and youth facilitators, parents and the Community as a whole.

The **City of Toronto** provided \$10,000 in funding and pledged on-going support for the initiative. The **Province of Ontario** provided \$30,000 for this project and an additional \$5,000 for development of a *Violence Awareness & Prevention* booklet for youths.

Workplan -- Methodology

The project was carried out in three phases.

In the first phase, one pre-testing and five focus group sessions (averaging 19 youths per session) were held. In these sessions, in a setting of intense interaction, Black Community youth identified the causes of, and contributory factors to, youth violence.

The second phase was the January 18, 2003 Conference at the JCA.

Phase 3 is envisaged as one in which the individuals and organizations that have responsibility for taking corrective actions will identify priorities and outcomes, allocate resources and implement corrective policies and practices.

To facilitate follow-up by individuals and groups, this Project Report is being made available to over 60 organizations and leaders within Toronto's African Canadian Community. These stakeholders will be approached to lead action on Conference findings and recommendations. The JCA will monitor the follow-up initiatives on the identified issues and action areas.

3: PHASE 1 - FOCUS GROUPS

One pre-testing exercise and five focus group sessions were held.

The pre-testing exercise was held on Saturday, December 14, 2001. The rationale for the pre-test and the findings of this exercise are set out below.

Pre-Testing Exercise

The purposes of the pre-testing were:

- a) To test different approaches to group facilitation, in order to determine which are more appealing to the youths so as to ensure that the focus group exercises yield optimal benefits.
 - Thus, based on the response of the pre-test group, the actual questions to be asked in the focus group sessions would be refined and pitfalls avoided in terms of how sensitive issues should be approached and how to get the youth to discuss personal experiences that might be painful, or embarrassing.
 - Detailed planning of the focus group sessions could then be finalized.
- b) To assess the group facilitation skills of the youths selected for training to facilitate the focus groups.
 - The pre-testing exercise afforded the opportunity to start training of selected youth as focus group facilitators.

Composition of the Pre-Test Group

The pre-testing group consisted of:

- ◆ Fifteen (15) Black youths, ranging in age from 12 to 17 years;
- ◆ Three (3) were female;
- ◆ All were still in school, with three on the verge of completing high school;
- ◆ The youths were drawn mainly from Scarborough;
- ◆ All the youths were born in Canada.

For their preparation, the youths selected were provided with a Project Summary for the Pre-Test exercise. (See Appendix 1.)

In selecting the youths for the pre-test, care was taken to ensure a representative mix of participants. A number of the youths in the older age range (15 to 17 years) had been directly involved in acts of violence – both in and out of school – and as both victim and perpetrator. For the most part, the younger (12 to 14 years of age) participants did not have much personal involvement in violence but had all observed situations of violence and related to the issues from that perspective.

Also present at the pre-test were three parents, including one social worker and one teacher. Together with the two organizers, the number of adults was five.

Pre-Test Findings

The major findings of the pre-test were:

- 1) At the commencement of the focus group session, the participants should be put at ease. This means that prior to commencement of the formal exercise, there should be an opportunity for the participants to mix with each other and the focus group facilitators and begin to relax. Also, the seating arrangement for the participants should be such that all feel included in the process. The facilitator must be able to make ready, and frequent, eye-contact with each and every participant.
- 2) The design of the sessions should be “issues-based” rather than “question-based”. This means that there must be a conscious process of issue exploration as opposed to an approach to elicit and record responses to a series of questions.
- 3) Unless a participant volunteers, sensitive/potentially embarrassing information and/or experiences should not be probed until a basis of trust has been established and the discussion is flowing freely.
- 4) Care should be taken to validate and contextualize the experience and opinions of younger participants. (In some situations, it may be better if the younger participants form a separate focus group.)

- 5) A natural tendency emerged for some youths to establish themselves, or be taken, as the group spokespersons. These tend to be either the youths who are more articulate, or assertive, or both. The temptation to focus on these youths and to pay less attention to, or ignore, the shy, or less articulate, should be consciously avoided.
- 6) An understanding of the issues, attitudes, factors, circumstances, etc. which lead to acts of violence among Black youth in the Community began to emerge.
- 7) There is a great need for the youths to be equipped with tools for coping in a non-violent way with violent situations.
- 8) The youth facilitators require training in specific areas of facilitation and additional exposure to focus group management – to be provided in the first set of actual focus group sessions – before being given the primary responsibility for conducting the focus groups.

The focus group sessions were organized using these insights.

Focus Group Deliberations

Five focus group sessions were organized. The sessions were held as follows:

1. At the Scarborough Town Centre YMCA on April 19, 2002. There were 23 attendees, with ages ranging from 12 to 29 years. There were 12 males and 11 females.
2. At the Rexdale Community Health Centre on July 10, 2002. There were 17 attendees, with ages ranging from 10 to 20 years. There were 8 males and 9 females.
3. Downtown Toronto at the Women's Centre, 523 Spadina Avenue, on July 24, 2002. There were 15 attendees, with ages ranging from 15 to 29 years. There were 6 males and 9 females.
4. In St. Jamestown at the Martingrove United Church on August 19, 2002. There were 18 attendees, with ages ranging from 10 to 20 years. There were 10 males and 8 females.

5. And at the Oakville Collegiate Institute on Monday, November 11, 2002. There were 25 attendees, with ages ranging from 13 to 18. There were 9 males and 16 females.

All of the sessions followed the same format, beginning with an exploration of what, in the minds of the youth, constitute violence, how it is manifested in its various forms; and proceeding to the various ways in which it is perpetrated. This phase was followed by the youths describing their own experience of violence, ending with their ideas about how violence, as it is manifested in its various forms, can be curbed.

Violence Defined:

The youths offered a comprehensive definition of violence, stating that violence is manifested in acts, words and behaviours that:

- Directly, or indirectly, cause other persons physical pain and often involves the use of guns (shooting) and other weapons, fists (fighting), other aggressive physical contact.
- Excessive use of force by parents in disciplining children. (Parents have been known to hit children with pistols as a form of discipline).
- Lead to gang rivalry (participants cited instances of teens being beaten up for trying to leave gangs), sibling rivalry.
- Are racist - racism is a form of violence; it is an expression of anger and in an extreme and/or repetitive form, can lead to suicide.
- Destroy the property of others, including acts of vandalism.
- Are destructive to other people; hurt other people by imposing superior strength on them; hurt other people in non-physical (eg. emotional) ways including use of derogatory language and are abusive.
- Do not flow from love or respect.
- Degrade or dehumanize another human being.
- Provoke others through physical, or verbal, means and forces one to take defensive action.
- Result in economic violence e.g. feminization of poverty; denying equal pay to women (and some men)

Appropriate Responses to Violence:

Violence Sometimes "okay"

Many participants felt that it was "okay" to use violence in certain circumstances. Those who stated that it was "okay" to use violence in certain

circumstances, cited the following as situations in which violence is acceptable, in their view:

- In self-defence. (Sometimes, but not always, words may be used as effectively as physical force to defend oneself. When words fail physical force is used.)
- Protecting oneself from the threat of attack.
- In a situation where one is subjected to chronic abuse.
- Where mothers feel the need to protect/defend their children.
- Where one is powerless to change, or influence, a dangerous situation.

In all cases they stated that force should be used as a last resort and should be limited to the severity of the threat. A number of participants also felt that force should be used as a deterrent (not as a punishment). Some felt that an appropriate amount of force may be used by parents in disciplining their children.

Violence Never "okay"

Other participants expressed the view that it is **never** "okay" to resort to violence and that the appropriate response to the threat of violence is to:

- Walk, or run, away

They felt that even in circumstances of severe danger, physical retaliation was not acceptable and options such as calling in the police should be used.

There was a strong view that one of the most disapproved forms of violence was unwarranted use of force by police.

Use of Violence

The majority of participants stated that they have felt the need to use violence to get someone to do/desist from doing something for/to them.

If/when faced with the threat of violence, participants offered the following responses:

- Stand up to repeated bullying. There was a strong view that the only effective way of dealing with repeated bullying is to retaliate in order to get the message over to the bully that you are not prepared to continue being abused. It was felt that the mere act of retaliating (even if you are unable to overcome the bully) reduces the frequency and impunity of the attacks. It was recognized, however, that a weaker person trying to stand up to a bully may be tempted to use a weapon in order to improve his/her chances against the bully. By

and large, participants felt that the use of weapons represented a dangerous and unacceptably severe expression of violence.

- Walk, or run, away.
- In the school setting, complain to the Principal (not the ordinary teacher). Participants felt that complaining to the ordinary teacher is a waste of time, as in their experience the teachers are reluctant to intervene and if they feel compelled to intervene, their intervention is not effective. On occasion, this only serves to enrage the bully who, later, at the first opportunity wreaks his vengeance on the victim. Also, there is a tendency for peers to frown on the complainer.
- There is a severe risk in complaining to the police as this makes the complainant a "marked" person and the police does nothing to protect the complainant. As such, there was almost universal aversion to using the option of lodging complaints with the police.

Witness to Violence

A number of participants stated that they had witnessed acts of violence, including extreme violence and in some cases, the use of guns. They stated that their reactions to this violence were:

- Fear – especially when they saw guns
- Not to get involved
- To mind their own business
- To call the police
- To avoid being drawn in as a combatant, or becoming a casualty of the violence

Probed as to what their approach would be if they felt impelled to intervene in a situation in which there was the threat of violence, they stated that they would:

- Try to lower the level of confrontation by reasoning with the combatants
- Try to keep the combatants apart
- Use the "power of words" to get the combatants to talk about their disagreement rather than to fight
- Use their friendship with one/both of the combatants to make peace
- Show respect to the feuding individuals and appeal to them to show respect to each other

The youths identified the following causes of violence.

Causes of Violence

Root Causes of Violent Confrontation

The youths stated that in their experience, the root causes of violence are:

- Anger.
- Sense of powerlessness - violence is triggered because people do not have any control of their situation.
- Easy availability of guns.
- Fear, and the need for protection (*"If I have a gun no one can talk to me in a disrespectful manner, 'cause I'll hurt them"*.)
- Indulging in certain drugs ("weed").
- Gang rivalry.
- Sibling rivalry.
- Sense of satisfaction from using superior power.
- Small disagreements, mistakes, slights that lead to major conflict.
- A small issue that is not settled quickly and satisfactorily can escalate into violence.
- Weaker persons resorting to weapons to improve their chances against bullies.
- Hurt pride, especially in a public setting.
- The need for some individuals/groups to control certain areas (territoriality).
- Some persons want to earn a reputation.
- Others want to preserve the reputation that they have earned.
- Many people are disgruntled about their poor situation and lowly status in the society.
- The high and growing incidence of inequality and the stigmatization that comes with being poor and disadvantaged breed anger and frustration that lead to violence.
- The inability to develop the means and acquire the resources to shape one's own life also causes violent reactions.
- Racism is a source of violent behaviour; hate.
- Lack, or loss, of hope.
- Poverty.
- Harsh, differential treatment, in which Black youth see others being given second chances but not they.
- The unearned privileges enjoyed by others.
- Unfair targeting of poor areas and provocation and harassment of its young, Black, residents by police.
- Invasion of privacy and violence by the state.

- Reaction to the systemic, endemic violence that is a feature of North American society.
- Religious intolerance, particularly against Muslims, especially after Sept 11, 2001.
- Being a practising Muslim woman makes you a target for violence.
- Disrespect - of/by others; among males, male pride (need to prove their masculinity) and peer pressure.
- Fathers feel and teach their children that violence is necessary.
- Traditionally, men are defined by their capacity for violence.

Violence and the Media

The youths stated that the media are:

- Motivated by profits and do not have a real interest in stopping violence.
- Saturated by violence and there is virtually no television show, for example, that does not feature violence in one form or another.
- Ineffective as a group, even when they claim to be trying to stop violence.
- Guilty of blowing acts of violence in some areas out of proportion and stereotyping the areas and residents as violent.
- Guilty of romanticizing certain large, powerful, groups wielding weapons as being "manly" and "heroic" and this fuels the interest in violence by young people who emulate such characters

They cited the following movies and shows as regularly portraying violence: *New Jersey Drive; Baby Boy; Friday; Snoop Doggy; Southpark; The Simpsons; Dragon Balls; Megababies; The Outsider; Wrestling; Power Puff Girls; The Hurricane; The Sopranos...*

Participants were scathing in their comments about the coverage of violence in the media and expressed the following views:

- Violence coverage is very racialized e.g. the media does not portray "white collar" crime in the same way as "violent" crime. Even in its coverage of violent crime, there is a clear difference in the way in which, for example, murders of wives by their husbands (perceived as more prevalent in the white population) are treated in comparison with "Black-on-Black" crime and "brown people kicking the shit out of each other".
- The media's penchant for sensationalizing certain types of violent crime tends to perpetuate the cycle of violence and re-inforces the mainstream view of Black people as prone to deviant behaviour – reference the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

- In a number of instances the media concern appears to be less about accuracy than the advancement of a broad strategy to denigrate certain groups of people.
- Media coverage is deficient in not going into analysis that would show the underlying factors and forces that lay the scene for violence; it fosters the instant, "micro wave", mentality.
- The media appear to be more concerned about being the means through which a certain group of the traditionally privileged in the society think and impose their views – the will of a small band of middle-aged/old white men.
- Media coverage of violence exemplifies the fact that the society was created and is maintained by racism.

(In)Effectiveness of Teachers in Curbing Violence in Schools

Participants stated that, faced with the threat of violence in school, they would:

- Walk away.
- Refrain from complaining to teachers because:
 - "the teachers don't care";
 - complaining would only make the situation worse as peers would frown upon the complainant;
 - "you do not want anyone to think that you are a 'wuss' " (a baby; a rat);
 - on many occasions teachers are not fair, or sensitive, in how they handle the situation i.e. teachers appear to be biased and treat students accordingly;
 - teachers are more concerned with punishment (zero tolerance) than understanding the situation;
 - teachers do not see/refuse to acknowledge the disrespect for other (non-mainstream) cultures and (non-white) racial groups and the racism that is everywhere and is an underlying cause of violence

Zero Tolerance in Schools

Participants were aware of the Safe Schools Policy and commented on its impact as follows:

- The intent of this policy is to eliminate violence, but in implementation it is racist and discriminates against non-white students, particularly Black youth.

- Minority students are routinely treated more harshly in the way in which the policy is carried out.
- Teachers are using the policy as an “easy way out” – instead of getting to the root of problems.

For Black students, the Safe Schools Policy has become a “band-aid” solution and the problems that should be addressed in schools are pushed out into the street where they tend to escalate into major acts of violence.

Personal Experiences of Violence

Participants were asked about their personal experience with violence. Many stated that they have had personal experience of violence – engaging in violent acts as self-defence and to defend / protect younger siblings. Among the comments were:

- “Yes. I was forced to use violence to defend myself. Even so, I was not comfortable with it.”
- “I used violence to preserve the family pride. Being the oldest in my family, I had to protect my younger sisters. But the physical violence made me sick.”
- “I was always being harassed because I was being bussed to school in a different neighbourhood. Once I used violence and nobody ever troubled me again.”
- “I am a passive resistance type of person, but I have had to use violence. It was not a nice experience. I believe it should be used only as a last resort.”
- “I am not a male, but sometimes I wish I were so that I could ‘kick ass’ and stop the constant harassment and abuse that I have to take – about my look, my dress, etc.”

Young Women and Violence

In exploring the perception that young women today are more violent than in the past, the youths commented:

- Everybody – men and women – are more violent today.
- If women are more violent today, then one of the reasons must be the earlier age at which they are exposed to violence and the fact that there is more violence around them.
- One of the factors could be more extensive reporting. For example, in the old days a man who was abused by his wife would never report it; today he might.

- The old ideas of masculinity and femininity are being challenged and as women take on more and more traditional masculine roles, there is also some tendency for them to be more violent than before.
- Where women have power that can be preserved by violence they will use violence to maintain that power.
- Males sometimes induce females to indulge in violence.

Violence and Drugs

On the issue of violence and drugs, participants felt that:

- There may be some connection between drugs and violent crime to secure money to support a drug habit.
- There may also be some incidence of violence by drug dealers in protecting their “turf”.
- However, it was felt that a larger issue could be that drugs serve as a means of escaping poverty and was a minor cause of violence among youth in the Community.

Racism and Violence

Racism breeds violence, in the view of the participants, because it creates conditions where the victims:

- Feel powerless to chart their own destinies.
- Realize that legitimate opportunities are denied them.
- Feel as if they are continually backed into a corner.
- Reach a stage where they feel that racism and violence go hand-in-hand.

Cures for Youth Violence

The youth participants expressed the following views on how the urge to violence and acts of violence can be eliminated:

Economic Issues

- More opportunities must be provided for Black youth to earn and develop job skills.

- Parents and organizations that serve the Community must take greater advantage of the opportunities offered by the federal, provincial and municipal governments for subsidies and other training and support opportunities for youth employment – there was a perception that large amounts of the funding that are earmarked for these activities are annually left unspent and returned to government, creating the erroneous belief that Community needs in the areas are satisfied.
- Funding must be provided for Black youth to be able to transform ideas and opportunities into business.
- Government at all levels must develop information and outreach programs that are appropriate to the disadvantaged sectors of the Community – these are the sectors that need the services more than any other and they have special communication requirements for effective action.
- Government must ensure the adoption both in the public and private sector of a “fair wage” policy for women.
- Successful Black entrepreneurs, entertainers, sports personalities, business persons, professionals, politicians must begin to work together in a co-ordinated, concerted way to change the system of neglect and exploitation of Black youth (and, indeed, the Black Community as a whole).
- The Black Community needs to find ways and strategies for translating their influence in certain areas into power and gain control of economic sectors through these means.

Media Issues

- “Blacksploitation” movies, although intended to make Blacks visible and give them a voice in the all-important film and electronic media, did not portray Blacks in a positive light, but rather as gangsters, pimps, abusers of women and persons of such ilk. The media were able to get away with this because Blacks and other minorities did not have much “say” in what was produced.
- The Black Community, through appropriate education outreach, must institute a process for a better understanding of how to use its power to change the marginalization of Blacks in the media.
- Part of the process should involve developing leadership on specific issues and assigning responsibility for these issues to specific Community organizations.
- Black actors and media personalities should not accept roles that are degrading. It is recognized that they have to earn a living but at the same time they should draw the line on certain portrayals.

- Black audiences should be educated about the value of such films as *Amistad* and should be encouraged to support them financially.
- The media should move away from extremes in portrayal of Blacks as not all Blacks are the Huxtables as in *The Cosby Show*, nor are they all like the Blacks that are featured on shows such as *BET*. Most are ordinary people, leading fulfilling lives as solid citizens and responsible, but not rich, mothers, fathers, etc.
- The Black Community must protest against the negative media images by means of consumer boycotts, political education, developing an understanding of Black history and financially supporting Black enterprises that work for Community upliftment.
- The Black Community does have some influence in the areas of music, films, fashion design, unique linguistic expression and imagery and should learn how to translate this influence into power in these areas and move into a position of control.
- Black men need to challenge the system’s fostering the idea of their inferiority and inadequacy. They also need to address the issue of their exploitation of Black women.

Gender Issues

Gender-based violence can be avoided by:

- Parents in the home leading by example and consciously avoiding pairing masculinity and violence.
- Teachers also consciously assigning traditional gender-based roles to students.
- The recognition that violence against women, women’s status, and roles are deeply ingrained in the psyche of society and a consistent effort has to be made to eradicate the stereotypes.
- Fostering respect for females and males equally.

Issues in Schools

- Reporting threats, incidents of violence to teachers only makes the situation worse – each youth must find a way of dealing with such threats, incidents, etc. without “complaining” to teachers. (Complaining to teachers makes you seem like a “wuss”.)
- Teachers do not act to control, or prevent, incidents of violence and have not explained / taught students how to deal with such issues. This lapse must be corrected.

- In a framework of "zero tolerance" even minor incidents are blown out of proportion, but there is no mechanism for teaching students how to address these issues.
- Teachers should be more sensitive in responding to reports about threats, incidents, etc. of violence, because acts of violence can be prevented if they:
 - recognize the reality of violence in the school environment;
 - monitor threatening situations closely until the danger dissipates;
 - stop overlooking early warning signals and only become active when violence occurs;
 - ensure that the "punishment" for acts of violence fits the "crime";
 - make a conscious and consistent effort to create and maintain a climate of trust, approachability, listening, consideration and respect for all students;
 - address reports of threats, etc. without identifying the complainants, thereby preserving the "peer dignity" of those who are vulnerable.

Issues in the Home

Parents must:

- Teach/explain the difference between reality and "make-believe" (violence as seen in films).
- Monitor what their children are viewing and listening to.
- Recognize that, nowadays, virtually all TV programs and movies contain elements of violence and their responsibility as parents is to decide what is appropriate for their children to see – depending on their age and maturity.
- Realize that discipline does not mean abuse, and that appropriate forms of discipline must be used.
- Accepted forms of discipline do not include means that leave marks of violence on their children – that is abuse.
- There should be standards of parenting, and parents who do not attain the standards should receive counselling on how to be good parents.
- Parents should learn how to use other techniques such as verbal scolding, psychology, etc, as effective forms of discipline, in place of violence.
- Identify and foster good role models that their children can follow.

Personal Issues

On the level of the individual, the following means of avoiding violence were cited:

- Resolve to use words effectively, for example, forgiveness for (slight) wrongs.
- Develop the courage to face a bully and reason with him/her.
- Walk away from situations before they escalate into violence.
- Seek group protection from imminent threats.
- Appeal to authority figures around (teachers, older more responsible youth, parents, police) and use them as deterrents.

Issues of Racism

To eliminate racism and the violence due to it, participants stated:

- Develop and show respect for all people irrespective of colour, race, gender, etc.
- One does not have to like others who are different from us but we must respect everyone.
- Refrain from judging others and acting on the basis of superficial, outward appearance – get to know the real person.

4: PHASE TWO – BLACK YOUTH CONFERENCE

In the second phase, a representative group of the youths who were responsible for generating the ideas in Phase One presented them to a gathering of adults and institutional representatives at the January 18, 2003 one-day Conference. The presentations provided adults with an insight into youth violence, how they as adults contribute to the violence and how they must, as parents, teachers, police, social workers, employers, etc work with youth to address the problems.

Conference Attendees

The list of invitees was developed on the principle that all areas of concern identified by the youths should be represented at the Conference. Invitations were, therefore, sent to parents, teachers, social workers, businesses, the police, the media, service provider organizations that are involved with youth, particularly youth at risk and the faith community. (Refer to Appendix 5 for List of Invitees). In addition, the general public was invited through flyers (see Appendix 4), announcements over Community radio, by e-mail, by announcements at other Community events and by word-of-mouth.

Over 40 representatives, covering a cross-section of the Community, attended the Conference. A number of invitees who tendered excuses for not being able to attend the Conference, offered their support for the project and specifically requested copies of the Project Report as soon as it was available.

Conference Program

The Conference was chaired by Ms. Valarie Steele, President of the JCA. The Program for the Conference is attached at Appendix 2. The day's proceedings were broken up into the following three parts:

a) Welcome and Project Background.

Ms. Valarie Steele welcomed the attendees and gave a brief synopsis of the project and the JCA's role in working with the Community and other organizations and groups in addressing Community issues.

b) Presentations by Four Youths.

Four youth presenters were chosen from participants at the five focus group sessions and trained to be effective presenters. The four were:

- Nasra Agil, 20, Ryerson University Civil Engineering student and Project Facilitator of the 2002 Summer Leadership Program at Rexdale Community Health Centre. Nasra's presentation covered the areas of: *What is Violence?, Root Causes of Violence, Issues in the Home, Young Women and Violence, and Appropriate Responses to Violence.*
- Jermaine Harris, Grade 9 Student at York Humber High School. Jermaine made a presentation on *Violence in Schools and Zero Tolerance in Schools.*
- Ebony Rose, 12, Grade 7 Student at Humberwood Downs Junior Middle Academy. Ebony's presentation was on *Violence and the Media.*
- Hassan Farah, 12, Student at Humber Summit Middle School. Hassan made a presentation on *Racism and Violence* and *Violence and Drugs.*

The presentations highlighted the focus group findings and served as the basis for the Open Discussions segment of the Program.

The texts of the presentations are attached at Appendix 3.

c) Open Discussions on the Issues Raised

The open discussion was moderated by Cikiah Thomas, President, *Dynamic Management Consultants Inc.* who were the consultants for the project.

The highlights and recommendations on the key issues raised in the discussions were:

A: Parenting Issues

The opinion was consistently and strongly voiced that parents have no nobler duty and no greater responsibility than to nurture their children and to bring them up in a safe, caring environment, inculcating in them values that will ensure that they grow up to be responsible, successful citizens.

However, comments also recognized that the reality of life in Toronto and in Canada, often distract Black parents from carrying out their responsibilities in a satisfactory manner. Racism in the society leads to frustration that takes a

heavy, personal toll on parents and can push them into behaviours that do not create a happy home-life for their children.

It was stressed that if parents are vigilant in all areas of their children's lives: communicating with them at all ages, being aware of sibling relationships, school activities and academic performance, sports, entertainment, friendships, etc. they would be able to nip in the bud any untoward behaviour, or traits, ensuring that they never become "problems".

B: School Issues

The role of parents in relation to their children's success in the school system could not be over-emphasized. The youths had stated unequivocally, that their teachers did not care, that they discriminated against them, that zero tolerance was just another excuse for victimizing them, providing an easy way out so that instead of the school addressing problems within its walls, it pushed them on to the streets.

The Conference recognized that the Toronto School System is failing Black students at all levels and raised the issue as to whether the time has not come for **Black-focused schools** to be established. It was argued that, at the very least, such schools should not be opposed because they could not be worse for Black children than the schools that they attend at present. It was stated that the Black 'graduates' of the present school system were valuable only for supporting the criminal justice system, social workers, etc and were not being prepared for success roles in the society.

In terms of forcing the existing system to work for the Black students, a number of participants recounted their experience where they were only able to receive fair treatment by "taking-on" the system. The strategies used to gain access to criteria used for denying their children positions for which they were qualified included:

- documenting instances of teacher bias;
- protesting in person and in writing to schools' principals;
- filing complaints with Schools' supervisors;
- threatening to file formal complaints with the Education Ministry and
- threatening to file freedom of information petitions

Participants also claimed that some teachers are still "guiding" Black students away from higher academic occupations into sports, or second tier occupations.

The message that emerged from these discussions is that Black parents must be prepared to engage the school system, right up to the highest level, in order to ensure that their children receive fair treatment. At the same time, the idea of **Black-focussed schools** must be fully explored.

C: Policing Issues

The consensus of opinion was that there was great need for Toronto's police to show respect and adopt a more caring approach to Black residents of the City. Contributor after contributor related anecdotes from personal experience with the police that convinced them that the police treat Black citizens with far less consideration than they show whites. As a result, the impression was created that the City's Blacks were under siege by the police.

This does not foster good relations between the Community and the police. At the same time, both from the focus group discussions and the comments during and after the discussion phase of the Conference, the message was given that the Community needs the police for its protection.

The fact was emphasized that the vast majority of Blacks are law-abiding, abhor violence and, in situations of violence, fear for their lives. However, they do not feel comfortable with the police, based on the current profile of the Toronto Force.

One of the most significant issues raised was the recent instance in which Toronto Police Chief, Julian Fantino, refused to address the issue of lack of police respect for young Blacks. There was virtually unanimous condemnation of the way in which the issue was (mis-)handled and the fact that it disrespected not only the young questioner, but all Black people and particularly Black youth.

Inspector Sloly, one of the four 31 Division Police representatives present at the Conference, provided valuable insight into the challenges confronting Police, particularly Black Officers, in their duty in the city. He gave a sensitive and thought-provoking analysis of the situation and was well received.

At the same time, the police was challenged to respond to an issue of a Black youth who had been refused entry into the service, apparently because of discrimination. Another Police representative present, Sergeant Winston LaRoche, explained that the Police Force was now a much more welcoming institution and met with the individual to provide advice on how to proceed to take advantage of the opening doors in the service.

The Conference took the opportunity to acknowledge the genuine concern expressed by the police officers present at the Conference and to assure them of the Community's understanding of the pressures that they face, recognized the risk in what they are doing in reaching out to the Community in a more ethnic-sensitive manner and acknowledged the need for guidelines and a Community strategy for ensuring that the Community can capitalize on the interest and expertise of these officers.

The critical question that arises is:

What action now must be taken to solidify the rapprochement between the Police and the Community, particularly Community youth?

D: Media Issues

Conference participants endorsed the charges against the media made by the youth. They also acknowledged that it was very difficult to influence the media and/or to get it to see and correct its own biases.

It was also noted that the ability of Community leaders to relate to the media and co-opt it for Community issues was a key requirement.

Comments made also recognized the great value to the Community of the *Toronto Star* series of articles on "racial profiling". It was noted that while there have been a number of studies that have established that the pernicious practice exists and the entire Black Community was aware of police practice of "racial profiling", as a mainstream paper, the *Star* addressing the issue carried significantly more weight than Community efforts.

E: Racism Issues

Racism issues permeated the discussions, whether the focus was policing, parenting, schooling, the media, or other dimensions of the youths' lives. There were two types of responses that were proposed in dealing with this issue.

On one level, some contributors felt that the best approach would be for Black adults to ignore the racism in the society and teach the youths to ignore it as well while encouraging them to focus on developing self-respect that would make them impervious to racist remarks, attitudes and acts. It was argued that such a tactic would force the racists to show them respect in return.

Countering this view was the approach that showed that such a compliant tactic has not, and will not, work, that it leads to gross distortion in inter-ethnic relationships as it leaves the racists free to wield untrammelled power over the others. The results, it was argued, are situations in which outstanding young Black graduates from Toronto's best universities are forced to accept minimum-wage (*Tim Horton's; MacDonald's*) jobs in a skill-short economy. Further, it was pointed out that the "see no evil" approach breeds the exact disrespect that the youths have denounced and that is one of the main triggers of violence.

While not condoning, or excusing, such violent reactions, one can appreciate that giving *carte-blanche* to racists will only contribute to continued tension and is a recipe for Blacks to remain in an inferior, dependent position. In any case, today's Black youth in Toronto are not prepared to accept such a situation.

The critical question remains:

How can the Community most effectively combat anti-Black racism?

5: PHASE THREE - POST CONFERENCE: WHAT NEXT?

Project Outcomes

Analysis of the project confirms that, from the outcomes, the immediate project goals were realized. At the same time, for the longer range project goals, a process has been initiated for them to be achieved in the near future.

Goal 1. Understanding of the Root Impulses for Violence

One of the main goals of this project was the development of a comprehensive understanding of the root impulses for youth violence. That such an understanding was achieved is reflected in the youths' exhaustive list of factors that cause violence among them and the detailed recommendations of how these factors can be eliminated.

Further, in the process of presenting their perspectives, the youths identified shortcomings in parenting, teaching, counselling, policing, media policies and practices, etc. A clear link was established between these shortcomings and a climate of violence, injustice, inadequate care and consideration, lack of respect, communication difficulties and deficiencies in inculcating coping skills in the youths for them to be able to deal effectively with situations that lead to violence.

Goal 2. Empowering Black youth to deal with Violence

The project was also successful in taking the initial steps to empower Black youth in Toronto to deal with violence in a non-aggressive manner. This was achieved through the project mechanism that led the youths through a process of identifying the situations that lead to violence, examination of the emotional context for violence and the realization that there are non-violent responses that can be made to confrontational situations.

The project revealed that most Black youth are not exposed to the techniques of conflict resolution in schools or at home and that this is a major deficiency that needs urgent attention. What is needed are specific programs to equip youth with the means for detecting the early warning signals of a potential

conflict, how to defuse such situations and when they do occur, how to resolve them without recourse to violence. Such skills should be an integral part of the "tool-kit" of Black youth in Toronto.

Goal 3: Create an Environment of Trust between Black Youth & the Adult World

The 113 Black youth that participated in the project were able to relate to adults in a setting of mutual respect, and ease of communication, and were provided with the opportunity to offer their views and interact with their peers and adult organizers of the project irrespective of their opinion. In fact, they were actively encouraged to offer their particular point of view and to tell of their experiences. The fact that the youths were approached for their opinions and that these were deemed to be important, was a key factor in creating the conditions of trust between them and the adults.

It was gratifying that at the Conference the adult participants endorsed many of the views of the youth, heaped praise on them for their insights into the issues and accepted the youths' propositions as the basis for future action. Both during the focus group sessions and the Conference, the environment was one of trust and mutual respect between the youths and the adults.

Goal 4: Strengthen the Community's Capacity to Respond to Youth Needs; And

Goal 5: Build long-term Relationships & Support Community Crime Prevention

These are longer-term goals that could not have been achieved within the span of the project. However, the project was successful in laying a solid foundation for the attainment of these goals through specific follow-up actions.

Follow-Up Actions (for Realization of the Longer-term Project Goals)

A: Development of Community organization Strategies

A plea was made at the Conference that the ideas and emotional capital generated should not be wasted. It was recognized that harnessing the opportunity provided by the Conference lay in Community organizations coming together to work out strategies and implement programs to address

the concerns identified.

The JCA will, first, assess ways and seek resources for strengthening its in-house programs in relevant areas to give effect to the recommendations of the Conference. It will also begin working with its project partners and enlist the interest of other Community organizations to address the issues raised. A number of organizations has already been identified. They include: The Markham African Caribbean Association, the York Region School Board, and the Toronto School Board.

B: York Region Community Policing Initiative as a Model for Toronto

York Region has developed an innovative approach to policing in the African Canadian Community. The approach involves the Police having regular, scheduled meetings to discuss situations and bring forward issues that affect the Community before they deteriorate into problems between the Police and the Community, or become major social issues. The approach is a pro-active one to head-off potential problems.

The approach also recognizes the need to foster understanding and mutual respect between the Community and Police. To accomplish this, York Region has instituted the practice of young police officers-in-training to become familiar with, and known in, the Community. This serves to establish the young officers as fellow citizens first, with the same interests and concerns for Community well-being as everyone else, and as police officers second.

These pro-active approaches have been supplemented by successful strategies to promote racial minority officers into positions of profile in the Police Service. Aspiring young Community members see such officers as role models, develop respect for them (and for the Force as a whole) and are encouraged to choose policing as a worthwhile career.

Inspector Sloly and Sergeant LaRoche of the Toronto Police Force are familiar with the York Region initiative and feel that, with necessary modifications, it can serve as a model for Toronto. The Community will be working with these and other Toronto officers to implement a similar approach in Toronto.

C: Youth Empowerment Strategies

The youth have specifically mentioned that there are no in-school programs

that teach conflict resolution. This, they feel, is a major deficiency. Toronto prides itself in being one of the most diverse cities in the world. It should be recognized that while this diversity is a source of strength, it also poses major challenges.

A number of these challenges come to the fore in the school population, where in addition to the strains that all young people face at this time in their lives, some must also contend with biases born of ignorance and the need to define and establish themselves within the society. It is among the school-age population that there is the first, all-important, awareness and experience of the implications of this diversity.

There is a clear need for programs of "understanding, interaction, and conflict resolution". JCA will be seeking resources for development and implementation of such courses.

Booklet – Violence Awareness and Prevention

A handbook, teaching youth to be aware of the various ways in which violence can be triggered and providing advice on how the situations can be avoided and such violence prevented, will be developed. The intention is that this booklet will form part of the "tool-kit" of all youth (Black and non-Black) who feel the need to be able to deal with confrontations and other forms of violence in an effective manner.

Wide Dissemination of Project Report

This Project Report will be made available to all the organizations and individuals that participated in the Conference and focus group sessions, the invitees to the Conference, the media, schools, Community organizations and government departments (provincial, municipal and federal) that have responsibility for youth and mandates for youth issues, economic development, education, the elimination of racism in the society, etc.

The Report will be accompanied by an invitation for the organizations/ individuals to pay particular attention to the issues highlighted that pertain specifically to their area of interest / responsibility and the need for programs to address the issues. They will be requested to provide information, advice, support, etc for initiatives to address the highlighted problems. The responses and subsequent program activities will be co-ordinated by the JCA.

END

PROJECT REPORT

BLACK YOUTH VIOLENCE - Causes & Cures

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – Project Summary for PRE-TEST

Black Youth Violence - Causes And Cures

Project Summary For:
Teachers, Parents and Youth involved in the Pre-testing phase of the project for
development of the facilitation module.

What Is This Project About?

The overall objective of this project is to understand why Black Youth, especially boys and young men, are involved in violence in Toronto and to explore with the youth, parents, teachers, social workers, the church and police and other interested parties ways of changing the behaviour of these youths.

Project Background

a) Black Community Concerns

There is a perception that more Black Youth, especially boys and young men, are involved in violent behaviour than any other group of youths in Toronto. This "involvement" in violence includes Black Youth **causing** much of the violence and also being the ones who are the **victims** of this violence.

Parents, relatives and friends of the victims are deeply hurt by their loss and are very concerned for their personal safety and the safety and lives of others. Also, in the wider society there is a view that Black Youth are out of control, are unsafe to associate with and are not to be entrusted with any worthwhile responsibility. As a result, young Black men, and women, are being viewed as undesirable, are not given the same opportunities as other young people and have to struggle harder to gain respect and the support that they need.

Many young Black men who are not in the least involved in violence suffer from this view by the wider society. They are, therefore, made to pay a high and unfair price for the violent behaviour of a few.

b) Call For Action

Many parents, relatives, friends of the victims of violence and other individuals who are concerned about the violence prone image of Black Youth, have spoken out about the situation and called for action to stop the violence among Black Youth and teach them to change their behaviour.

Recently, in the wake of a number of incidents of violence involving young Black men, many members of the Black Community in and around the Greater Toronto Area have approached the Jamaican Canadian Association (JCA) and demanded that the JCA use its authority and influence to develop a program to get the young men to stop the violence. There is general agreement that even though the number of violent young Black men is small, it is still too many and there is need for urgent action to remedy this situation.

c) The JCA Responds To The Call For Action

The JCA is a membership organization that provides cultural and social services to Jamaican, Caribbean and wider African Canadian communities in Ontario. The Association was formed in 1962 and incorporated in 1971. It is governed by a 12-member volunteer board of directors. It currently has approximately 1200 members.

The Association has responded to the Community demands by taking leadership for development of proposals for an all-inclusive **Conference on Black Youth Violence**. This Conference will provide a forum for identification of the causes of violence and begin the search for cures. It will involve 100 – 150 youths, parents, teachers, social workers, business interests, the church, the police and other organizations and parties that work with youths.

d) Project Goals

The goals of this project are to:

- i) Develop a comprehensive understanding of the issues, attitudes, factors, circumstances, etc. which lead to acts of violence among Black Youth in Ontario.
- ii) Empower Black Youth in Ontario to deal with violent situations by providing them with tools for coping in a non-violent way with these situations.
- iii) Create an environment of mutual respect and trust between youth and the adult world in general and the police/justice system in particular.
- iv) Build long-term partnerships among parents, teachers, social services, police, business, etc on the issue of youth violence.
- v) Support community crime prevention through programs to reduce youth violence and related criminal activity in the Black Community.
- vi) Strengthen the capacity of the Black Community to respond to the needs of its young people.

What Are Being Pre-Tested And Why Is This Necessary?

This project involves a research component to identify the causes of youth violence among young Blacks, followed by presentation of the research findings to parents, teachers, business and other involved institutional representatives/partners and a joint search for solutions.

The project will be carried out in three phases. The first phase will consist of five focus groups (each of 20 to 25) in which, in a setting of intense interaction, Black Community youths will identify the causes of, and contributory factors to, youth violence. Prior to holding the focus group exercises the following preparatory work must be done:

- a format must be decided on,

- the best ways of posing the questions must be assessed and
 - techniques for ensuring that the participants become fully involved need to be developed.
- This is the pre-testing exercise.

The object of this pre-testing is to ensure that:

- the most effective means are used in the focus groups,
- refining the questions to be asked, and
- planning of the focus group sessions.

What Will Be My Role?

Youth Participants:

- respond to the issues/questions posed
- interact with other youth participants
- volunteer your views on issues you think are important
- provide feedback on the exercise, i.e. what was done well, what needs to be improved, how improvements can be made.

Teachers:

- observe the pre-testing exercise process
- assess the effectiveness of the methods used
- provide feedback on the exercise, i.e. what was done well, what needs to be improved, how improvements can be made.

What Are The Expected Outcomes?

The expected outcomes from the pre-testing exercise are:

- a sound understanding of how the issues around youth violence can best be introduced to a group of youths from Toronto's Black Community;
- an appreciation of the dynamics at work in facilitating a group discussion with these participants;
- effective methods of posing sensitive issues to the group;
- the kinds of methods that should **not** be used in posing these types of issues to such groups;
- a final list of questions for posing in the focus group exercise, and
- how to plan the focus group sessions for maximum effectiveness.

CONFERENCE

BLACK YOUTH VIOLENCE - CAUSES & CURES

Hosted by the Jamaican Canadian Association

with Support from

Toronto City Council & Ontario's Ministry of the Solicitor-General

At the Jamaican Canadian Association
995 Arrow Road, Toronto

Saturday, January 18, 2003

Organized by:
DYNAMIC MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS Inc.
Toronto, CANADA

Black Youth Violence Conference Program

Chair: Mrs. Valarie Steele, President, Jamaican Canadian Association

Registration & Seating of Delegates..... 8:30 - 8:55AM

Opening Plenary

Call to Order..... 8:55 - 9:00

Welcome & Background to Black Youth Violence Project, by
Conference Chair, Mrs. Valarie Steele..... 9:00 - 9:15

Announcements..... 9:15 - 9:20

Refreshment Break..... 9:20 - 9:30

Black Youth Violence – CAUSES..... 9:30 - 10:30

What is Violence?

Root Causes of Violence

- Re Issues in the Home
- Re Issues in Schools
- Young Women & Violence
- Drugs & Violence
- The Media & Violence

Appropriate Responses to Violence

Open Discussion

Arrangements for Breakout Group Sessions..... 10:30 - 10:45

Black Youth Violence – CURES..... 10:45 - 11:45

Breakout Groups Discussions

Lunch Break (Lunch provided) 11:45 - 12:30

Black Youth Violence – CURES (Cont'd)..... 12:30 - 3:00

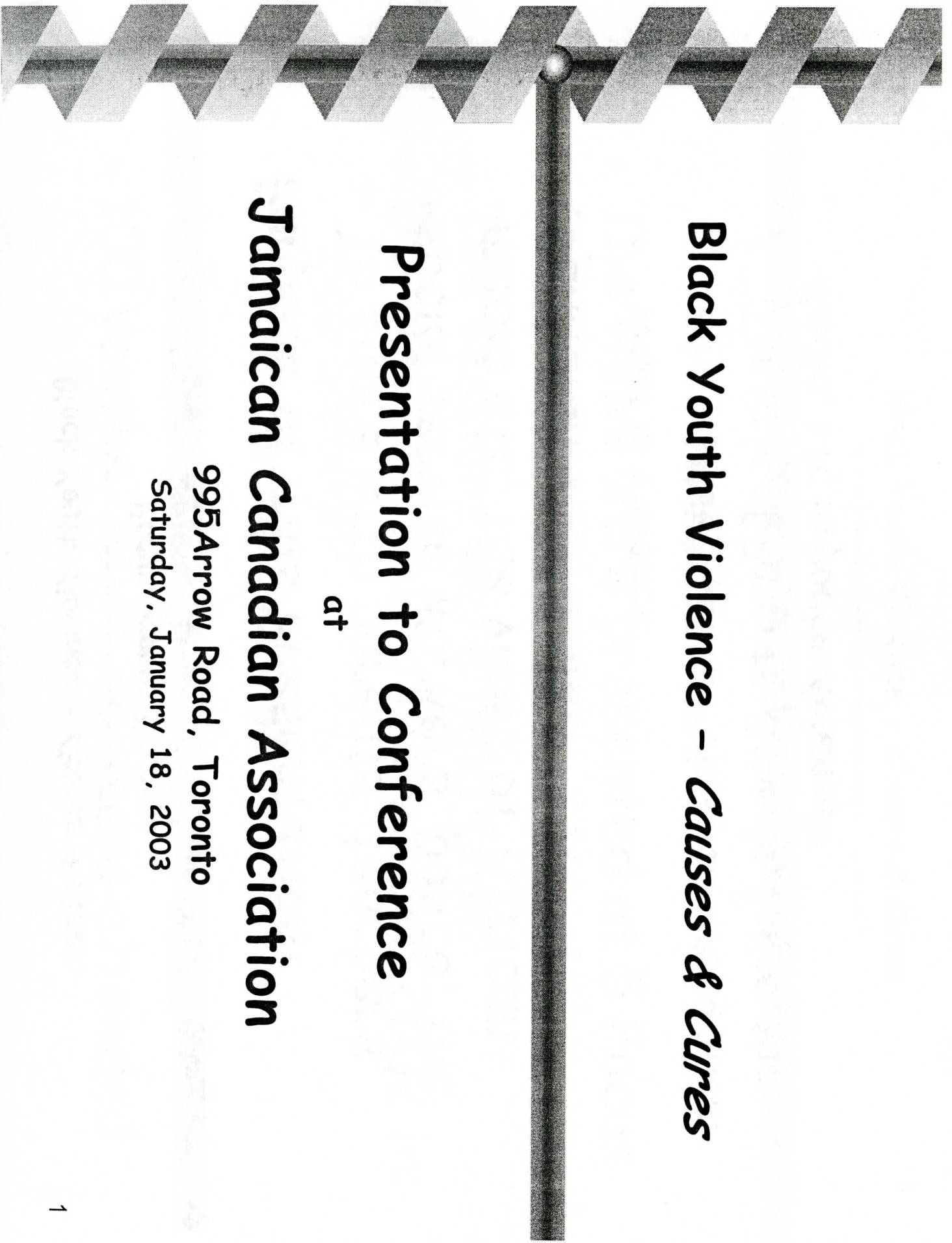
Breakout Groups Discussions

Refreshment Break..... 3:00 - 3:15

Closing Plenary

Next Steps..... 3:15 - 3:30

Close..... 3:30 - 3:45



Black Youth Violence - Causes & Cures

Presentation to Conference at

Jamaican Canadian Association

995 Arrow Road, Toronto

Saturday, January 18, 2003

APPENDIX 3: Youth Presentations

- BLACK YOUTH VIOLENCE – Causes & Cures -

» Introduction

⚡ The views were presented at 5 Focus Group sessions of Black Youths

⚡ The sessions were held from December 2001 to November 2002 in:

- Scarborough
- Downtown Toronto and
- Jamestown

⚡ 100 youths, 10 to 28 years attended

Purpose of this Presentation:

⚡ To share with parents, teachers, social service workers, police, the media etc, the views of African Canadian Youth on:

- What is Violence
- What Causes Acts of Violence among them
- The Role of Parents, Schools, Police, the Media, etc in youth violence

What is Violence? (cont'd)

🚲 It is also:

- Being destructive to other people
- Hurting others who are weaker
- Hurting others in emotional ways
- Using derogatory language; being abusive
- Physical, or verbal, provocation that forces one to take defensive action

What is Violence?

🚲 It is acts, words and behaviours that:

- Cause other persons physical pain
- Often involve the use of guns (shooting)
 - other weapons; fists (fighting)
 - other aggressive physical contact

🚲 It is also:

- Excessive force to discipline children
- Destroying the property of others

Root Causes of Violence:

- Anger
- Sense of powerlessness
 - Violence is triggered when people do not have control of their situation
- Easy availability of guns
- Fear, and the need for protection
 - "If I have a gun no one can talk to me in a disrespectful manner"
- Hurt pride, especially in public
- Disrespect of/by others

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What is Violence? (cont'd)

🚲 It is Disrespect, Hate & Racism:

- Actions & words that do not flow from love or respect
- Behaviour that degrades or dehumanizes
- Economic violence e.g.
 - Feminization of poverty
 - Denying equal pay to women (and some men)
- Racism is also a form of violence
 - In an extreme form it can cause suicide

The root causes of violence are (cont'd)

- Poverty
 - People are unhappy to be poor with low status
 - The big & growing gap between rich and poor
- Anger and frustration from being poor
- Harsh, unequal treatment
 - Many Black youth see others being given second chances but not they
 - The unearned privileges enjoyed by others
- Harassment of young Blacks by police
- Lack, or loss, of hope

The root causes of violence are (cont'd):

- Gang rivalry
- Sibling rivalry
- Satisfaction from using superior power
- Some persons want to earn a reputation
- Others want to preserve their reputation
- The need for control of territory
- Escalation of small conflicts
- Indulging in certain drugs ("weed")

Violence in Schools

- Many students do not complain about violence to teachers because:
 - "The teachers don't care"
 - Complaining only makes the situation worse
 - Peers would frown upon the complainant
 - "You do not want anyone to think that you are a 'wuss'" (a baby; a rat)
 - Many times teachers do not handle conflicts fairly, but are biased in how they treat kids
 - Are more concerned with punishment (zero tolerance) than understanding the situation

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The root causes of violence are (cont'd):

- Violence is a feature of our society
- Religious intolerance:
 - Practising Muslim women are targetted
 - Male disrespect, male pride and peer pressure
- Fathers feel and teach their children that violence is necessary
- Traditionally, men are defined by their capacity for violence
- Invasion of privacy; violence by the state

Re Issues in the Home:

🚲 Parents must:

- Realize that abuse is not discipline
- Not use violent means of discipline
- Observe standards of parenting
- Attend counselling on how to relate to their children
 - Learn techniques such as verbal scolding
 - Psychology, etc
- Identify and foster good role models that their children can follow

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Zero Tolerance in Schools

🚲 Zero tolerance is not stopping violence

🚲 In implementation it is:

- Racist and
- Discriminates against non-white students
- Applying harsh treatment to Black youth
- Used by teachers as an "easy way out"
- A "band-aid" solution For Black students
- Making school problems street violence

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Violence and the Media

🚲 The media are:

- Motivated by profits
- Not really keen on stopping violence
- Saturated by violence
- Guilty of:
 - Sensationalizing violence in some areas
 - Stereotyping the areas; residents as violent
 - Romanticizing certain large groups wielding weapons as being "manly" and "heroic"
 - Thus fuelling youths interest in violence

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Re Issues in the Home:

🚲 Parents must:

- Teach/explain the difference between reality and movie "make-believe"
- Monitor what their children are viewing and listening to
- Recognize that their responsibility as parents is to decide what is appropriate for their children to see - depending on their age and maturity.

Violence and the Media (cont'd)

🚲 Media coverage of violence is:

- racialized
 - Violent crime shown more negatively than "white collar" crime
 - So-called "Black-on-Black" crime is shown most negatively
 - Re-enforcing negative views of Black people
- Less about accuracy than pushing a strategy to denigrate certain groups
- Deficient in not showing the underlying factors that lead to violence

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Violence and the Media (cont'd)

🚲 Movies & Shows that are violent:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| • <i>New Jersey Drive</i> | <i>Baby Boy</i> |
| • <i>Friday</i> | <i>Snoop Doggy</i> |
| • <i>Southpark</i> | <i>The Simpsons</i> |
| • <i>Dragon Balls</i> | <i>Megababies</i> |
| • <i>The Outsider</i> | <i>Wrestling</i> |
| • <i>Power Puff Girls</i> | <i>The Sopranos</i> |

Violence and Drugs

🚲 The youths felt that:

- Addicts may sometimes commit violent crimes to get money for drugs
- Drug dealers may also use violence to protect their "turf"
- A larger issue could be that drugs serve as a means of escaping poverty
- Drugs was a minor aspect of youth violence in the Community

Young Women and Violence

🚲 Are young women today more violent than in the past?

- Men and women are more violent today
- Women's violence is due to exposure to the increasing violence around them
- Women are also taking on more masculine roles, including being violent
- Males often induce females to be violent

Appropriate responses to Violence (cont'd):

🚲 Others said:

- Never use violence
- Call the police
- Walk, or run, away

🚲 In any case, violence should be a last resort

Appropriate responses to Violence:

🚲 It is "okay" to use violence:

- In self-defence
- In a situation of chronic abuse
- Where mothers feel the need to protect/defend their children
- Where you are powerless to change, or influence, a dangerous situation

🚲 In these cases the violence should be limited to the severity of the threat 20

Racism and Violence

🚲 Racism breeds violence by creating conditions where the victims:

- Feel powerless to plan their own lives
- Realize that legitimate opportunities are denied them
- Feel as if they are continually backed into a corner
- Reach a stage where they feel that racism and violence go hand-in-hand

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Appropriate responses to Violence (cont'd):

🚲 If/when faced with the threat of violence:

- Stand up to repeated bullying.
- Retaliate to stop abuse
- Do not be tempted to use a weapon
- In school, complain to the Principal (not the ordinary Teacher).
- Complaining to the police can make you a "marked" person and the police often does nothing to protect you

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YOUTH VIOLENCE!!

What are the *CAUSES*?

How can it be *CURED*?

In May, 2002, the Jamaican Canadian Association launched a project to find out from our youth:

- *the reasons for acts of violence among them;*
- *how they feel about violence; and*
- *what they think can be done to stop it.*

We now plan to share the findings with parents, teachers, social workers, the Community, ... and the public at large at a Conference on:

Black Youth Violence: Causes & Cures

to be held at the Association at 995 Arrow Road, Toronto on Saturday, January 18, 2003.

(For further information, please contact the JCA at: 416 746-5772)

Black Youth Violence – Causes & Cures ----- Focus Groups Findings

Reaction to Violence

🚲 Youths who had witnessed violence reacted with:

- Fear – especially when they saw the guns
- Not wanting to get involved
- Minding their own business
- Calling the police
- Avoidance, so as not to be drawn in as a combatant, or becoming a casualty of the violence

APPENDIX 5

Black Youth Violence Conference – List of Invitees

Government

The Honourable Bob Runciman
Minister of Public Safety and Security
Ministry of Public Safety and Security
11th Floor, George Drew Building
25 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON
M7A 1Y6

Hon Jean Augustine
Multiculturalism & Women's Issues
House of Commons
Ottawa

His Worship, Mayor Mel Lastman
Mayor, City of Toronto
2nd Floor, 100 Queen St. West
Toronto, ON
M5H 2N2

Ms. Sherene Shaw
Councillor
Toronto City Council

Ms. Olivia Chow
Councillor
Toronto City Council

Community Organizations

Toronto Youth Cabinet
Mr. Kehinde Bah, Chair
55 John St, 11th Floor
Toronto, ON
M5V 3C6

Black Youth United
Ms. Asha Noel
273 Lauder Avenue
Toronto, ON
M6E 3H5

Toronto District School Board
Ms. Stephnie Payne
School Trustee

**York Regional District School Board
Community Education Centre East**
Mr. Mike DeLyon
Community Liaison Officer
1 Dickson Hill Road
Markham, ON
L3P 3J3

Oakwood Collegiate
Ms. Pauline Bullen
991 St. Clair Avenue West
Toronto, ON
M6E 1A3

Humewood Community School
Ms. Althea Rhooms
Principal
15 Cherrywood Avenue
Toronto, ON
M6C 2X4

Visions of Science
Mr. Francis Jeffers, President
Tel: 416-667-2924

Seneca Association of Black Educators
Larry Daisley, Professor
1750 Finch Ave. E.
Toronto, ON
M2J 2X5
Tel: 416-491-5050 x2546
Fax: 416-491-6853

Canadian Assoc. of Black Educators (CABE)

Assoc. of Black Law Enforcers (ABLE)
Mr. R. David Mitchell
60-8 Bristol Road East, Suite 401
Mississauga, On L4Z 3K8

African Canadian Legal Clinic (ACLC)
Ms. Margaret Parsons, Executive Director

C'dian Assoc. of Black Lawyers (CABL)
750 Oakdale Road, Suite #60
Downsview, On M3N 2Z4

Jane-Finch Legal Network
Mr. Nolan Merrick

Global Afrikan Congress
Ms. Beverley Johnson
15 Baldoon Road
Scarborough, ON
M1B 1V6

Canadian Labour Congress
Ms. Maureen Clarke-Walker
Executive Vice-President
2841 Riverside Drive
Ottawa, ON
K1V 8X7

Black Women for Progress
Ms. Sherona Hall

The Organization of Parents of Black Children

**United Mothers Opposing Violence Everywhere
(UMOVE)**
Ms. Audette Sheppard, Chair
545 Sherbourne Street
Suite 2001

Toronto, ON
M4X 1W5
Tel: 416-922-1783
Email: auddete@sympatico.ca

Harriet Tubman Community Organization
Ms. Tanya Jeffers
Youth Representative

Jane-Finch Concerned Citizens Org.
Mr. Winston LaRose
Executive Director
P.O. Box 21150, R.P.O
2885 Jane St.
Downsview, ON
M3N 2J6

Midaynta Association of Somali Service Agencies
Ubah Nur

Ontario Black History Society
Ms. Rosemarie Sadlier

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants

Somali Immigrant Aid Organization

The Black Caucus
Mr. Derek Lett, Convenor
72 Northey Drive
Toronto

Tropicana Community Services Org.
Ms. Sharon Shelton
Executive Director,
670 Progress Avenue, Unit 14
Toronto, ON
M1H 3A4
Tel: 416-439-9009
Fax: 416-439-2414

Black Action Defence Committee & Committee in support of the victims of violence
Mr. Dudley Laws
944A St. Clair Avenue
Toronto, ON
M6C 1C8
(416) 656-2232

Markham African Caribbean Association
Mrs. Ileen P. Howell
P.O. Box #76532
1661 Denison Street
Markham, ON
L3R 6E0

Eva Smith Achievement Association
59 Barnwell Drive
Scarborough, ON
M1V 1Z7

Each One Teach One
Andrea Brian, Coordinator
670 Progress Avenue, Unit 14
Toronto, ON
M1H 3A4
Tel: 416-439-9009
Fax: 416-439-2414

(416) 656-2252

Jane/Finch Community & Family Center
Margarita Mendez, Executive Director
108-4400 Jane Street
Toronto, ON
M3M 2K4
Tel: 416-663-2733
Fax: 416-663-3816

Urban Alliance on Race Relations
Mrs. Zanana Akande, Executive Director
302 Spadina Avenue, Suite 505
Toronto, ON
M5T 2E7
Tel: 416-703-6607
Fax: 416-703-4415

Pape Adolescent Resource Centre
Ms. Michele Hinds
469 Pape Avenue
Toronto, ON
M4K 3P9
Tel: 416-462-1010
Fax: 416-462-0161

Canadian African Newcomers
Mr. Sam Asante
21B Vaughan Rd. Suite 114,
Toronto, ON
M6G 2N2
Tel: 416-658-8030
Fax: 416-658-0746

Black Business and Professional Assoc.
Hugh Graham, President
675 King Street
Toronto, ON
M5V 1M9
Tel: 416-504-4097
Fax: 416-504-7343

His Brother Keepers
Mr. Courtney Betty, Chairman
180 Bloor Street West
Toronto, ON
M5S 2V6
Tel: 416-968-1181
Fax: 416-968-7619

The Marcus Garvey Centre for Leadership and Enterprise
Ms. Susette Collins, President
160 Rivalda Road
Toronto, ON
M9M 2M8
Tel: 416-740-4557

Individuals

Hon. Lincoln Alexander

Mr. Carl James
Professor, York University
Toronto

Mr. Lennox Farrell
67 Secroft Crescent
Downsview, ON
M3N 1R5

Mr. Grace-Edward Galabuzzi

Mr. Arnold Minors

Ms. Annamie Paul
13 Humewood Drive
Toronto, ON
M6C 2W3
(416) 656-8225

Newspapers:

The Ghanaian News
Emmanuel Akiku, Editor
2256 Sheppard Avenue West
Suite 202
Toronto, ON
M9M 1L7
Tel: 416-916-3700
Fax: 416-744-7959

Share Newspaper
Arnold Auguste, Editor
658 Vaughan Road
Toronto, ON
M6E 2Y5
Tel: 416-656-3400
Fax: 416-656-3711

Mr. Paul Kafele

Mr. Kevin King

The Caribbean Camera
Raynier Maharaj, Editor
55 Nugget Avenue
Suite 212
Toronto, ON
M1S 3L1
Tel: 416-412-2905
Fax: 416-412-2134

Pride News Magazine
Mr. Michael Vancooten, Editor
5200 Finch Avenue East
Suite 302
Scarborough, ON
M1S 4Z5
Tel: 416-335-1719
Fax: 416-335-1723

APPENDIX 6: Press Clippings (Toronto newspapers)

- BLACK YOUTH VIOLENCE – Causes & Cures -

Share
Jan 23, 2003

Black youths seek solutions to violence

By FITZROY GREENE

Racism, economic violence and the feminization of poverty are factors contributing to youth violence according to the findings of a youth study, "Black Youth Violence - Causes and Cures", presented at a conference last weekend.

Valarie Steele, president of the Jamaican Canadian Association and

ence, said the initiative was borne out of the Black community's concerns regarding a number of shootings during the past several years.

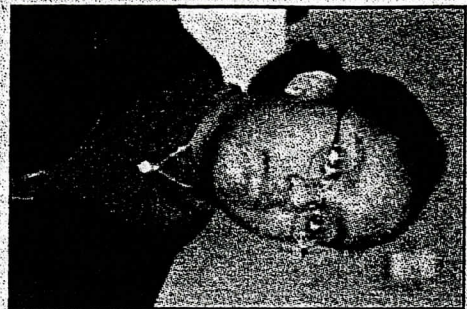
centage of Black youths are involved in random violence as aggressors and as victims. One thing we have to be aware of is, it is our community that is being victimized," said Steele. "And, if nothing

else motivates you to look at the crime rate within our community, the fact that we are the victims makes it even more urgent."

sis for the stigmatization of the Black and African community as being violence-prone thus providing another excuse for its victimization. Furthermore, because many See YOUTHS Pg. 22



NAZRA AGIL



EBONY ROSE



JERMAINE HARRIS



ASSAN FARAH



CIKIAH THOMAS



PETER SLOLEY

Youths show leadership

CONTINUED FROM PG. 1
young Blacks tend to accept the natural expression of violence often resorting to it without understanding the root impulses and consequences, they unwittingly perpetuate the image of the violent Black person.

"I've always believed the police cannot keep us safe. It shouldn't be their job. It's our job to keep ourselves safe," said Steele. "We must always determine what kind of community we live in, so if you can see or hear no evil, then we are going to be living in an evil community because I can't think of anything more evil than violence."

The 24-page report highlighted views of Black youth determined to define and address youth violence. It also addressed the role of parents, educators, law enforcement and the media in youth violence.

Data was gathered from 100 Black youths at five focus sessions held over a 12-month period in Scarborough, St. Jamestown and other downtown Toronto neighbourhoods.

Findings were presented by Ryerson University civil engineering student Nazra Agil, York Humber High School grade nine student Jermaine Harris, Humber Summit Middle School student Assan Farah and Humberwoods Downs Junior Secondary School stu-

dent Ebony Rose. The questionnaire was designed and administered by Jamaican-born Cikiah Thomas and his Trinidadian counterpart Sherman Thomas in collaboration with the JCA.

Thomas urged support for the work and efforts by the young research participants and conference presenters. "The notion there is no leadership within the Black community is a myth and this conference and the contribution of the young people is overwhelming evidence to debunk that myth," he said.

Speaking as a guest presenter, Toronto Police Staff Inspector Peter Sloley said: "Not all police officers are racist or disrespectful, and the Black community needs to get past those preconceptions in order to reach a point where it can find solutions and move forward."

"Racism exists within the police force because we hire human beings. Po-

lice officers don't think all youths are bad and conversely all youths don't think all police officers are bad.

"Crime is a societal issue and everyone shares the blame and everyone should be part of the solution."

Sloley said that Black-on-Black crime tends to be a marginalized issue, leading policy-makers to write off the problem as subject to a specific community.

"That stops them from finding long-term holistic solutions to the problem," he said. "The best way to fight for reforms in the justice system is to fight from within it for change. If you want a police service that represents your views, values and people, then you have to bring your people inside."

To obtain more information about the report's findings, call 416-746-5772.

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The Caribbean Camera
Jan 16, 2003

JCA CONFERENCE TO DISCUSS YOUTH VIOLENCE

THE JAMAICAN Canadian Association will be hosting a conference to discuss violence among black youth in an attempt to deal with the controversial issue.

In May last year, the JCA launched a project to find out from black youth why there is so much violence among them, how they feel about violence and what they think can be done to stop it.

The findings of this project will be shared with parents, teachers, social

workers and the community at large at the forum, scheduled for Saturday January 18 at 9:00 a.m. at the JCA Centre, 995 Arrow Road.

Registration for the conference begins at 8:30 a.m., and lunch and refreshments will be provided to participants.

The conference, called *Black Youth Violence: Causes and Cures* is believed to be the first of its kind in Toronto to specifically address this issue.

For information, call 416-746-5772.

The weekly cleaner (N.A.)
Jan 23-29, 2003

Youth violence: cause and cures

Focus of JCA conference

By Mark Lee

TORONTO

Toronto youth participants in a project of the Jamaican Canadian Association (JCA) are attributing violence to issues such as powerlessness, gang violence, poverty, media images and attitudes, and racism.

The views were presented at five focus group sessions between December 2001 and November 2002 as the JCA examined Black Youth Violence - Causes and Cures. The responses were presented at a conference at the JCA's headquarters, Arrow Road, North York, Toronto, on Saturday, attended by representatives of various community interest groups including the police.

"The project was developed about four years ago based on queries from our membership on means of stem-

ming violence and making the youth the best they can be," said JCA president Valerie Steele. It was finally implemented when funding was secured from the Ministry of the Solicitor General.

Among the causes given by the 100 youths in the 10-28 age range were anger, a sense of powerlessness, the easy availability of guns, fear and the need for protection, hurt pride in public and disrespect by others. In addition, they identified gang rivalry, sibling rivalry, indulgence in illicit drug use, harassment by the police, unfair treatment by teachers in schools, peer pressure and racism.

Accusing the media of being motivated by profits and with no interest in stopping violence, the youths said the news organs sensationalised violence, stereotyped whole communities but at the same time romanticised certain large groups who wielded weapons of power as heroic.

They also fingered violent films

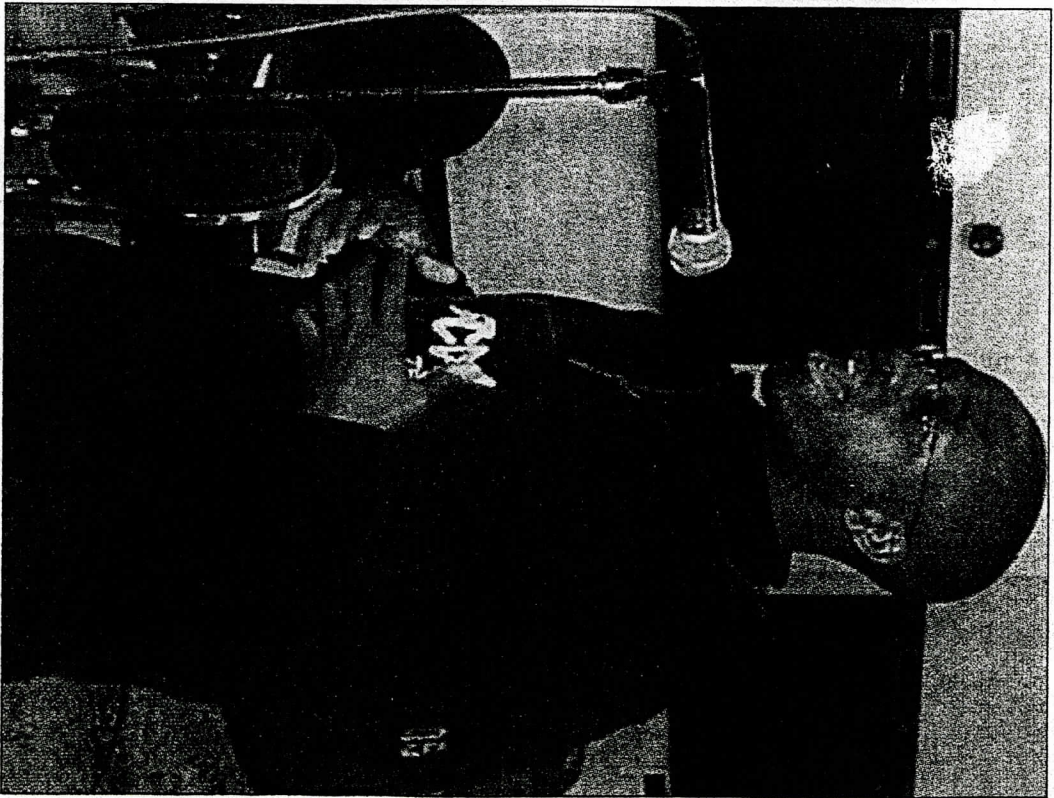
and television movies such as "New Jersey Drive", "Friday", "Dragon Ball-z", "Baby Boy", "The Simpsons" and "The Sopranos", which they said distorted reality. They believed parents should help them differentiate between reality and movie make-believe.

Parents were also called on to act more responsibly, realising that abuse was not discipline and to abstain from violent means of discipline.

Conference moderator Ciktah Thomas said a major challenge in addressing youth violence was the inflexibility of the police, the media, teachers and other institutional players.

He said that as fundamental human rights issues were at stake, the Canadian Government needed to be challenged at the international level in fora such as the United Nations.

"One of the things that blacks will have to do is look at using UN avenues for remedial action," he said.



Young poet Jason Humphries Kintie makes a contribution to the JCA's Black Youth Violence - Causes and Cures conference.

MARK LEE

BLACK YOUTH VIOLENCE – Causes & Cures

About the JCA...

The JCA is a membership organization that provides cultural and social services to Jamaican, Caribbean and the wider African Canadian Community in Ontario. The Association was formed in 1962 and incorporated in 1971. It has approximately 1,200 members and works with about 200 volunteers yearly in its social services and membership programs. It is governed by a 12-member volunteer board of directors, elected at the annual general meeting in May.

The JCA's broad Mandate is to adopt policies and initiate action that help to satisfy the needs and advance the interests of the Black Community. In carrying out this Mandate the JCA develops projects and programs that cater to family needs, youth, new immigrants, etc. Its programs contribute to reduction of tension within the Community and between Community members and the wider society. The Association also works co-operatively with other organizations and institutions to take a united approach on issues of common interest.

Sources of Funding

The JCA receives program funding from the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government. Core funding is provided by United Way.

Services

The JCA serves the Greater Toronto Area. Its services include:

- Settlement services for new immigrants, primarily from Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean;
- Family services through the Caribbean Youth and Family Services office;
- A "violence against women and children" counselling service;
- A Saturday morning tutorial program for children;
- A summer camp for elementary school children;
- An older workers employment assistance program;
- Outreach services to schools, including a program delivered in partnership with local police officers to "at-risk" African-Canadian children aged 7 - 9;
- Outreach services to new immigrants and other youths and adults in detention.

The issue of youth violence in the Black Community is a key advocacy area for the JCA.

